

III. Remarks

Claim 2-14 are pending in the application. Claim 1 is hereby cancelled.

Amendments to the Specification

Paragraph 27 is amended to correct a call-out number for ventilation grill 14.

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 5, 9, 12, and 13 have been amended and re-written in independent form to include all of the limitations of claim 1 and any intervening claims.

Claims 2-4, 7, and 14 have been amended to depend from claim 9.

Claims 6, 8, 10-11 have been amended to address objections and rejections raised by the examiner.

Claim Objections

The examiner objected to claims 2-14 because of informalities primarily relating to awkward grammatical construction. Applicants have amended these claims as suggested by the examiner.

Claim Rejections 35 USC § 112

The examiner rejected claim 8 and 13 pursuant to 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has amended claim 8 to change "dividing walls" to "dividing wall" and provided language to more particularly point out the adjacent relationship between the dividing wall and the airbag module.

Claim 13 is amended to be in independent form, and now particularly points out and distinctly claims a dividing wall.

The foregoing amendments fully address the examiner's claim rejections under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph.

Claim Rejections 35 USC § 103

The examiner rejected claims 1-4 and 7 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debler et al (US2003/0001366 A1) in view of Elliott et al (US2002/0160706 A1). Applicants hereby cancel claim 1. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 3 because Debler does not disclose a dividing wall of the ventilation duct "adjacent to" the airbag module. As shown in Debler Figures 19-21, the structure which the examiner construes as a "dividing wall" is presumably Debler's "partition flap 80" which delimits the area of Debler's air vent 34. See Debler paragraph [0062]. Even if this partition flap could be construed as being a part of the airbag module housing 40, and even if it does form a housing wall for the airbag module, partition flap 80 is not adjacent to the airbag module but rather projects upward in space towards the dashboard 14. This structure contrasts with applicants' claim of a dividing wall which is truly adjacent to the airbag module. See, e.g. applicants' Figure 1.

Nevertheless, applicants have amended claim 3, as well as claims 2, 4, 7 and 14, to depend from claim 9 which, as discussed below, has been amended and is in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

The examiner objected to claims 5, 6, 9, 12, and 14 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Similarly, the examiner indicated that claims 8 and 13 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants have accordingly rewritten four of the dependent claims in independent form: claims 5, 9, 12, and 13. As amended, each of these four claims incorporates all of the limitations of claim 1 as originally presented. Additionally, claim 5 incorporates all of the limitations of claim 3 as originally presented.

Claim 8 is amended to particularly point out and distinctly claim "dividing walls." Claim 8 depends from claim 7, which in turn depends from claim 9. Inasmuch as claim 9 is in condition for allowance, claim 8 is similarly in condition for allowance.

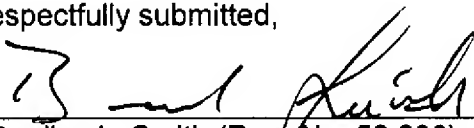
Claims 10, 11, and 14 have been amended to depend from claim 9 and are now similarly in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully traverse the examiner's rejection of claim 3 because Debler does not disclose a dividing wall adjacent to an airbag module. Nevertheless, applicants have amended their claims fully consistent with the examiner's observations and remarks in the May 1, 2007 office action. Claim 1 has been cancelled, and claims 5, 9, 12, and 13 have been rewritten in independent form to incorporate the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The remaining claims all depend directly or indirectly from these rewritten independent claims. Claims 2-14 are therefore now in condition for allowance. Such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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